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RECENT CHANGES IN SOVIET NAVAL POLICY
PROSPECTS FOR ARMS LIMITATIONS IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN AND INDIAN OCEAN

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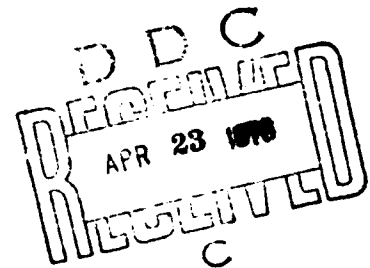
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RECENT CHANGES IN SOVIET NAVAL POLICY: PROSPECTS
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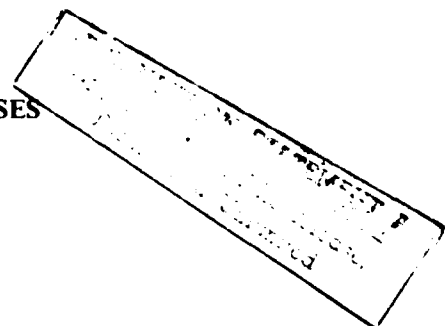
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Introduction

This paper discusses recent Soviet initiatives for agreement with the United States on naval arms control, and attempts to evaluate their significance in the context of the Soviet navy's increasingly active role in support of Soviet foreign policy.

It considers:

- o Brezhnev's 1971 proposal* for naval deployment limitations in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean;
- o Brezhnev's 1974 proposal for the withdrawal of ships carrying nuclear weapons from the Mediterranean;
- o The political environment in which the proposals were made;
- o The qualitative changes in Soviet naval diplomacy which became apparent beginning in 1973; and
- o The current apparent absence of Soviet interest in the forward-based systems (FBS) issue, as reflected in the results of the November 1974 summit meeting at Vladivostok.

It should be granted at the outset that there are a number of problems in assessing the intent and motivations of the Soviet

*As it is used in this paper, the term "proposal" includes within its meaning not only negotiating offers submitted formally, but also authoritative position statements made informally (e.g., in a public speech) by the Soviet leadership. Brezhnev's 1971 and 1974 public statements on deployment limitations are thus considered here to be "proposals" of the latter type.

public statements proposing naval arms limitations. First, there is the question of how serious the Soviets are in pursuing naval limitations. Secondly, assuming they are serious, there is the difficulty of understanding what kind of agreement is desired, and what specific weapons systems an agreement along Soviet lines might affect. Finally, there is the problem of discerning the minimum Soviet bargaining position: taken at face value, for example, Brezhnev's 1974 proposal offers no Soviet concession to match a withdrawal of U.S. strategic naval weapons platforms from the Mediterranean. Because of this vagueness and ambiguity, varying interpretations of these proposals are taken account of here.

Timing and Content of Soviet Naval Limitation Proposals

Since 1971, there has been a qualitative change in the character of Soviet peacetime naval operations and greater emphasis on the "internationalist mission" of the fleet. This development has been paralleled by what may appear to be an on-again, off-again verbal campaign for mutual U.S.-USSR naval limitations, principally in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. The timing and content of these proposals tell something about their motivation and the seriousness with which the Soviets have offered them.

The first of these initiatives was made explicit in the spring of 1971, when the USSR informally indicated to the U.S. an

interest in mutual naval restraint in the Indian Ocean.¹ In June of that year Soviet interest was made public when CPSU General Secretary Brezhnev stated the USSR was willing "to discuss any proposals" concerning measures to terminate the less than "ideal situation when Navies of the great powers are cruising about for long periods far from their own shores...."² In this context he referred specifically to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean.

At the same time--the spring of 1971--there were two related developments that explain Soviet interest in naval limitations and the lack of follow-through on Brezhnev's proposal: the promulgation of the Soviet Peace Program at the 24th CPSU Congress in April, and the recently ended Soviet campaign within the SALT forum for limitations on FBS.

The Peace Program confirmed the Soviet commitment to detente and proposed a number of measures--including arms control--for peaceful relations between East and West. The naval limitations proposal of 1971 accords with the general framework for the conduct of direct relations between the USSR and the West in the present period.

It was during the winter and spring of 1971 that the Soviets pushed hard for the inclusion of the FBS issue in a SALT agreement. By May 1971, according to John Newhouse, the Soviets had been persuaded to exclude the issue from the forthcoming agreement.³ Only one month later, Brezhnev went

public with the call for naval limitations in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Thus, when the Soviets agreed to table the FBS issue until after the SALT I agreement, they merely changed the forum in which to conduct the campaign. Soviet persistence on the issue suggests more than mere exploitation of the issue for immediate political gain. For this reason the FBS issue should not be considered a dead one even though the Soviets had stopped demanding its inclusion in the SALT agenda by the time the Vladivostok Agreement was signed in November 1974. The fact that the Soviets have apparently decided to forgo discussing FBS in this particular forum by no means forecloses the possibility of their raising it in the future in some other negotiating context. Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that this is exactly what the Soviets may now wish to do.

In a July 1974 speech before the Polish Sejm (parliament), for example, Brezhnev called for the "withdrawal of ships carrying nuclear weapons" from the Mediterranean.⁴ Since the Soviets consider the U.S. Navy's nuclear weapons platforms in the Mediterranean to be forward-based systems, the choice of an Eastern European country (directly involved in the NATO-Warsaw Pact negotiations on mutual force reductions) for mentioning Mediterranean security issues appears to be more than mere happenstance. A more explicit hint that the Soviets may now wish to discuss FBS in possible future European force reduction negotiations was given in September 1974 by Soviet President Podgorny in a Sofia, Bulgaria speech

honoring the 30th anniversary of the Bulgarian revolution:

Among the more urgent practical steps which would substantially improve the international atmosphere, one of the paramount steps is the further easing of tension in sectors where NATO and Warsaw Pact forces are directly contiguous. In this plane the Soviet Union attaches great significance to the Vienna talks on the reduction of armed forces in Central Europe. In addition, the Soviet Union advocates the turning of the Mediterranean into a zone free of nuclear weapons and into a zone of peace. This would be promoted by the withdrawal of ships with nuclear weapons on board from the Mediterranean region. The Soviet Union is ready to take such an important step, of course, on a basis of reciprocity. We believe that the taking of the above steps would facilitate in many ways the further normalization of the situation in Europe and throughout the world [emphasis added].⁵

Clearly, Podgorny was drawing a link between Brezhnev's proposal and the issue of what the Soviets like to call "military detente in Europe." His discussion of these two items together in the same paragraph and the importance he assigned to the naval arms limitation proposal for the settlement of issues between East and West in Europe suggest that a nuclear stand-down in the Mediterranean is, from the Soviet point of view, an essential adjunct to the reduction of land forces and weapons in Europe. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that in early October 1974 Brezhnev--this time speaking in East Berlin--again called for the removal of U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons platforms from the Mediterranean.⁶ Moreover, Soviet public comment on the Vladivostok summit meeting ignored the fact that FBS (that is, U.S. nuclear forces in Europe and the Mediterranean) had been excluded from the Vladivostok agreement.

One possible forum in which the issue could be raised is the MBFR negotiation. However, it should be pointed out that the Mediterranean currently falls outside the agreed scope of MBFR. To introduce the subject of Mediterranean arms limitation in MBFR would vastly alter that negotiation. The Soviets have not formally proposed such an expansion of the talks and the U.S. Government does not expect them to do so.

Nevertheless, the possibility that the Soviets may propose follow-on negotiations for that purpose cannot be discounted. Indeed, an article in the Soviet journal Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn' entitled "Problems of Military Detente in Europe" recently suggested as much:

The Soviet Union and other socialist countries proceed from the premise that the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe is by no means the end of the road toward European disarmament but just its beginning. As the Warsaw conference of the Warsaw Pact countries' Political Consultative Committee pointed out in April 1974, as successes were achieved at the talks in Vienna, it would be possible to begin talks on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in other regions of Europe too. Thus the process of reducing armed forces and armaments ought gradually to embrace the entire European continent....

Among the specific measures for "military detente" in Europe that the article alluded to in this connection were "the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the north of Europe and its guarantee by the nuclear powers" and "the withdrawal of Soviet and U.S. ships equipped with nuclear weapons from the Mediterranean region on a reciprocal basis"⁷ The article could not have drawn a clearer connection between Mediterranean arms limits on the one hand and European security issues on the other.

There are some potentially significant differences between the Brezhnev statements of 1971 and 1974.

- o The 1971 statement stressed both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean; the 1974 statement is limited to the Mediterranean.

- o The 1971 statement focuses upon continuous naval deployments in these regions--presumably the Soviet objection is to the stationing of naval forces abroad--not to intermittent deployment for "show the flag," transits, and special operations, etc. The 1974 statement does not address the issue of continuous versus intermittent deployments. Here the emphasis appears to be on weapons systems of deployed forces. This later proposal may therefore be designed to limit only forward-based strategic systems, rather than these and general purpose forces as well. The only naval weapons system which unambiguously depends on nuclear weapons to carry out its primary mission is the ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). At this time only the U.S. is reported to maintain SSBNs on station in the Mediterranean. Thus on the face of it (assuming that the critical problem of verification could be solved) only U.S. SSBNs would be affected by such an agreement.

Compared to the 1971 proposal, which presumably would have affected the general purpose forces (GPF) of both sides, Brezhnev's 1974 proposal is manifestly one-sided; and this may well explain Admiral Gorshkov's unprecedented public endorsement of the latter in a Soviet Navy Day article, published in Pravda on 28 July 1974. In view of the fact that Gorshkov has been advocating the enlargement of the Soviet Navy's GPF, he would

presumably have been far more reluctant to support any proposal that limited Soviet naval GPF freedom of action. Moreover, if implemented, the 1974 proposal would achieve a long-standing goal of the Soviet political leadership and navy--pushing the seaborne threat to the USSR farther from Soviet shores. Indeed, Gorshkov's endorsement could even mean that the Soviets want to free assets devoted to countering Polaris and Sixth Fleet nuclear weapons delivery systems for higher priority missions: protection of the Soviet SSBN force*, and support of Soviet foreign policy--"the internationalist mission" to which Gorshkov refers in this article. In any case, a denuclearization scheme would pose far less cost to his service than would a GPF deployment limitations scheme. However, regardless of the varying foci of the 1971 and 1974 Brezhnev proposals, the naval limitations issue in general remains a concern at the highest level of the Soviet political leadership.

*One interpretation of Gorshkov's "Navies in War and Peace" is that it reflects a comparatively recent Soviet decision on a "fleet in being" role for the Soviet navy's SSBNs; i.e., they will withhold at least some of their SLBMs through the main combat period to conduct intrawar bargaining and influence the ensuing negotiations for peace. Gorshkov may have been arguing for an increase in the Soviet navy's GPF for the protection of this SSBN "fleet in being". See James M. McConnell, "Gorshkov's Doctrine of Coercive Naval Diplomacy in both Peace and War," in Admiral Gorshkov on "Navies in War and Peace," CNA Research Contribution CRC 257, September 1974, pp. 71 ff.

Soviet Interest in Mediterranean Naval Limitations

Between the late 1950's and 1967, a common theme of Soviet statements on the Mediterranean was the call for its denuclearization and establishment as a "zone of peace." These statements reflected the USSR's concern over the strategic threat posed by Sixth Fleet, and were indicative of the Soviet Mediterranean squadron's inability to offer a credible counter to NATO naval forces in the region. At the same time, the Soviets put forth Middle East arms control proposals both at the U.N. and at various disarmament conferences.⁸ Western interest in these earlier overtures was lacking due to NATO's overwhelming military superiority in the region. The Arab defeat of June 1967, however, enabled the Soviet Union to considerably improve its position in the Mediterranean through access to Egyptian naval facilities, and Soviet calls for a Mediterranean "sea of peace" correspondingly subsided. This change also appeared concomitantly with the beginnings of the SALT negotiations. At the same time, the Soviet Mediterranean fleet was portrayed as an effective deterrent to the perceived threat Sixth Fleet represented to the Arabs. The gap between words and deeds was somewhat narrowed during the height of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. The Soviet threat to intervene militarily on behalf of Egypt was a qualitatively different reaction to the potential defeat of an ally compared to Soviet behavior in 1967. Though it is impossible to say with certainty that the Soviets would actually have done

so, the very fact that they would indicate a readiness to commit their military forces to intervention indicated that they were willing to accept a higher level of risk of military confrontation with the U.S., or, at the very least, a higher political risk, should their bluff, if it were one, be called.

In what may appear to be an exception to this pattern Leonid Brezhnev proposed "turning the Mediterranean Sea into a sea of peace and friendly cooperation" in June 1971. Some have suggested that Brezhnev's call was not a serious one. This interpretation, as we have seen, discounts the linkages between the issue and the course of the SALT negotiations at the time.

Brezhnev's recent revival in Warsaw of the "sea of peace" idea came at a time when the Soviet influence in the Middle East has diminished significantly. Thus, it may have reflected the Soviet Union's precarious position in the Arab world--most notably in Egypt, where the status of Soviet access to naval facilities, according to an April 1974 Sadat statement, was "under discussion."^{9*} Nevertheless, the Soviets may well believe that serious discussion of naval arms limitations in the Middle

*This threat has been partially carried out. According to recent reporting, the Soviets are now being denied access to Egyptian anchorages and their naval access to Alexandria is being curtailed. See Washington Post, 20 July 1975, p. A14, and New York Times, 28 July 1975, p. 1.

East is inappropriate as long as a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict remains beyond reach. Until then the Soviets apparently see value in keeping the issue alive in anticipation of future developments which may provide more urgent requirement for serious negotiations, such as further improvements in U.S.-Arab relations or the use of Diego Garcia for strategic force deployments.

Soviet Interest in Naval Arms Limitation in the Indian Ocean

Brezhnev's 1971 proposal for mutual naval limitations named the Indian Ocean as well as the Mediterranean as areas of primary Soviet interest for superpower naval limitations. Since then the "zone of peace" theme has been a frequent one in Soviet propaganda on affairs in the region, but the Soviets have been reluctant to support specific proposals by littoral nations to implement the concept. The closest the Soviets have come to support of littoral initiatives occurred during Brezhnev's November 1973 visit to India. In the "Joint Declaration" issued following the Brezhnev-Gandhi summit, both "reaffirmed their readiness to take part, together with all interested states on an equal basis, in the search for a favorable solution to the question of turning the Indian Ocean into a 'zone of peace.'"¹⁰

Subsequent to the October War and the resurgence of the Diego Garcia facility issue in 1974, the Soviets launched a massive propaganda campaign against the increased U.S. naval presence in the region and, concomitantly, revived calls for an Asian collective security system and an Indian Ocean "Zone of Peace."

Brezhnev's July 1974 proposal does not specifically mention the Indian Ocean. This omission suggests that, if the Soviets are serious, they currently prefer first to negotiate some kind of a mutual stand-down of strategic naval forces in the Mediterranean. Since Soviet relations with most nations of the Indian Ocean littoral remained essentially unchanged during 1974, the Soviets may calculate that the balance of power in the Indian Ocean is more favorable to them than to the West, and the level of risk of conflict escalation more acceptable. The Soviet Indian Ocean squadron's increasingly active role in support of Soviet policy in the region supports this notion. The lack of reference to the Indian Ocean in the latest proposal could also represent a Soviet effort to focus attention on Mediterranean security issues which could more naturally be linked to discussion of force reductions in the European theater.*

Nevertheless, the Soviets have long voiced concern (beginning in 1964) in their press over the region's potential for U.S. SSBN deployments. The increased U.S. naval presence since the 1973 war--especially the increased frequency of CV deployments--cannot be perceived as a reassuring development from Moscow's perspective. This concern suggests that Soviet interest in Indian Ocean naval limitations is not merely a propaganda tactic. There are real incentives for the Soviets to follow up the Indian Ocean "Zone of Peace" concept with specific proposals, and ultimately they very likely will. But currently they appear to be temporizing. This seems to be more a problem of timing than actual intent. The

*See above, pp. 4-6.

factors which account for lessened interest in Indian Ocean limitations at this time probably include: (1) the Soviet Union's preoccupation with its changed position in the Mediterranean; (2) that region's continuing potential for conflict involving the superpowers; (3) the marginal successes achieved in strategic arms control during the latest SALT round; (4) the lack of progress at the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in June 1974; (5) the Soviet military establishment's opposition to arms control;¹¹ (6) the favorable political opportunities in the Indian Ocean theater; and (7) the considerable effort the Soviets have expended in developing a major naval support facility in Berbera, Somalia. Thus, for the time being at least, the scope and intensity of Soviet naval operations in the Indian Ocean will probably continue to build.

Changes in Soviet Naval Operations in the Indian Ocean

Beginning in 1973, there has been both quantitative and qualitative change in Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean. Although the increase in forces deployed has been modest--an increase of about two combatant units (from four to six)--it is important in that it reveals something about Soviet intentions in the region: 1) a capability and willingness to match the increased U.S. force levels deployed to the region and 2) a heavier commitment of Soviet military power to nations in the region. Following the October War the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron was further augmented in reaction to U.S. naval deployments.¹² The Soviet crisis reaction was not unusual, but following the wind-down of the

crisis, the Soviets continued to maintain force levels slightly exceeding what they had been in 1972.

The qualitative change in Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean is clearly more significant than the change reflected in numbers of ships deployed. Since early 1974, the Soviet force has included more modern anti-carrier and anti-submarine units.¹³ Beginning in 1973, Soviet naval diplomacy manifested a critical expansion from essentially defensive operations on behalf of third world friends to greater non-defensive use. Increasingly the lines between defensive and offensive political use of the fleet are becoming blurred. Soviet naval diplomacy in the Indian Ocean during 1973 is illustrative of this overall change.

As an instrument of foreign policy prior to 1973, the navy in the Third World was employed almost exclusively to deter external or internal attacks on Soviet friends in the third world and to demonstrate against or provide a counterpresence to U.S. naval actions in crisis periods. These trends continue, as the Soviet reaction to CVA deployments associated with the October War in the Indian Ocean reveal. The Soviet Navy's belated involvement in the efforts to reopen the Suez Canal was apparently reactive, and may well have come about in response to the U.S. Navy's agreement to take part in de-mining the Canal, which the Soviets appear not to have

expected.* The Soviets expressed fears through their broadcast media that the American role in clearing it would enable the U.S. to influence the terms for warship transits of the Canal in a way adverse to Soviet interest.¹⁵ By participating in the Canal's clearance, the Soviets may have hoped to have a voice on this issue. The employment of the helicopter carrier Leningrad in the operation did not appear justified on technical or military grounds. Thus, it may well have been an attempt to draw maximum attention to the Soviet role in reopening the Canal by establishing a credible counterpresence to U.S. units participating in the aerial minesweeping of the Canal.**

In any event, the positive change in U.S.-Egyptian relations--of which the U.S. participation in operations to clear the Suez Canal was one of the most vivid symbols--could be an additional incentive for the Soviets to discuss naval arms limitations.

In contrast to these reactive-defensive operations of 1973-74, at least three cases of Soviet naval diplomatic initiatives in the region have been observed.

*Soviet press statements have on several occasions referred to DOD opposition to the Suez Canal's reopening. Though Secretary Kissinger is on record as favoring the Canal's reopening, the Soviets probably felt that the Pentagon would at least refuse to participate in its clearance.¹⁴

**Charles C. Petersen, "The Soviet Union and the Reopening of the Suez Canal: Mineclearing Operations in the Gulf of Suez," CNA Professional Paper 137, June 1975.

(1) Port Clearing in Bangladesh. The harbor-clearing operation in Bangladesh is a clear example of a Soviet initiative in naval diplomacy, undertaken to enhance and consolidate Soviet influence in this infant republic.¹⁶ While the efforts to help reopen the Suez Canal represent an attempt to cut expected losses, the Chittagong operation was an attempt to maximize gains that resulted from Soviet support of the independence of Bangladesh.

(2) Soviet support of "national liberation." In 1973-74, there is at least one case of Soviet naval support of offensive actions by "Progressive" regimes engaged in conflict against pro-Western or non-aligned nations. In April 1973, the Soviets gave overt support to Iraq in its territorial contest with Kuwait. Although the Soviets probably did not approve of Iraq's attack on Kuwait, Admiral Gorshkov's and the Soviet Navy's presence in Iraq during the negotiations on the dispute indicated Soviet interest in border rectifications that would increase Iraq's security. The operation is also associated with other practical steps the Soviets undertook at the time to promote unity in the Arab ranks--the sine qua non for facing Israel. The activity in the Iraq-Kuwait case, along with the Soviet sealift of Moroccan troops to Syria in spring and summer 1973, were concrete steps to promote the long-preached Soviet message of Arab "unity," and actively involved the Soviet navy.¹⁷

(3) Establishment of an AGI patrol in the Strait of Hormuz.¹⁸ Begun earlier this year, this patrol is not a reaction to real or potential threats to Soviet shipping in the Persian Gulf. It provides a capability to monitor passage through this choke point and may signal Soviet desires to prevent control of the Gulf by Iran and the West.

(4) Creation of the Somalia/PDRY axis. At the other strategic choke point in the northwestern Indian Ocean--the Bab el Mandeb--lie South Yemen and Somalia, both closely aligned with the USSR. The Soviet Navy has been both instrumental in deepening Soviet relations with, and a major beneficiary of enlarged Soviet access to, these countries. The Soviets frequently use naval facilities in both Berbera and Aden, and the navy no doubt plays a role in Soviet efforts to bring these states into closer coordination politically and militarily. The Soviet strategic objective is, of course, to strengthen its position at the southern end of the Red Sea, using Aden and Mogadiscio as vehicles. This is another critical area where the Soviets do not want Western dominance.

In all these cases, no Soviet friend was threatened with immediate danger. All have two common themes: (1) they involved direct interventions to shift the balance (rather than to maintain the status quo) militarily and politically in favor of the preferred side and--more significantly--away from the West (and China);

and (2) there was little, if any, danger of immediate confrontation with U.S. naval forces. These actions may be relatively low-key militarily but they represent a significant enlargement in the use of the fleet in a politically offensive or initiatory mode.

Finally, in describing a more aggressive Soviet naval policy East of Suez, note should be taken of the change in Soviet-Iranian relations which became evident in early 1974. Since the normalization of Soviet-Iranian relations in 1962, the Soviets have maintained a low profile in the Persian Gulf to balance their competing interests in Iran and Iraq. In recent years the Soviets even acquiesced in Iran's aspiration to become the dominant power in the Gulf, often reiterating that the states external to the Gulf should not interfere in its affairs. Following the increased Iranian military intervention on behalf of the Sultan of Oman, the Soviets have been more outspoken with regard to Iran, condemning Iran's role in Oman and its regional power aspirations.¹⁹ Additionally, the Soviets no longer seem to be acquiescing in Iranian plans to be the "policeman" of the Persian Gulf. These changes may portend of further polarization in Soviet-Iranian relations as each is intent upon exercising a naval role in the Gulf and Arabian Sea. This possibility would in turn increase the potential for East-West conflict in this area.*

*The potential for superpower conflict in this area will also be affected by the state of relations between each superpower's respective friend and its neighbors. The effect on stability in the Gulf of the recent apparent rapprochement between Iraq and Iran on the Kurdish issue remains to be determined, despite the collapse of the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq.

Prospects for Naval Limitations: The Soviet Perspective

The increasingly activist trend in Soviet naval diplomacy may appear, on the surface, to belie Soviet advocacy of naval arms limitation. However, one should not be led by this seeming inconsistency to conclude that Soviet pronouncements on "zones of peace" are lacking in seriousness.

Since the promulgation of the Peace Program at the 24th congress of the CPSU, the role of the Soviet armed forces--especially the navy--in the prosecution of Soviet foreign policy has been measurably enlarged. As the foregoing discussion shows, the Soviet fleet is now used directly as well as indirectly in support of general long-term foreign policies and specific diplomatic initiatives. This includes its use as an instrument to affect arms control negotiations with the U.S. The classic case is Soviet naval deployments to the Caribbean. While these operations serve a number of ends, in their political aspect they are, in part, a direct support for two closely related issues in the Soviet campaign for naval limitations: (1) in the past, the inclusion of the forward-based systems (FBS) issue in SALT (and at some point in the future, possibly in some other forum*); and (2) general purpose force deployment restrictions. It can be reasonably argued that one objective of the forward deployment of the Soviet Navy was to improve the Soviet bargaining position vis-a-vis the West in achieving a Western stand-down in areas close to the Soviet homeland. Herein

*See above, pp. 4-6.

lies one reason for the essential compatibility of an increasingly activist naval policy and simultaneous proposals to end that same naval competition. As Brezhnev has stated: any arms limitations negotiations must proceed on a basis of "equality."²⁰

But the establishment of a Soviet naval presence abroad is only partly explained by the incentive for arms control. As the Peac Program reveals, cooperation and competition are both essential elements in Soviet foreign policy. While seriously pursuing measures to normalize and improve relations with the West, the Soviets are committed to wage unending struggle against "imperialism" and render all assistance necessary to "national liberation." These words obviously apply to Soviet activities in the third world. There is again no inherent contradiction--as seen from Moscow's perspective--between a program designed to reduce the risk of war between East and West and a program of policies geared to support Moscow's rivalry with the West and China at a lower level of risk in the developing world.

Implications for the U.S.

In this regard, it appears that, should negotiations take place, any naval limitations agreement sought by the U.S. should constrain the military instruments available for implementing the Soviet Peace Program. Indeed, increasing importance is assigned the "internationalist mission" of the Soviet armed forces. Even Defense Minister Grechko--who long refrained from publicly

sanctioning this mission--has now confirmed the importance of the political mission of the Soviet military abroad.²¹ Grechko's statement is a significant indicator of future trends, although all the action implications of his words remain to be determined. What is evident from Grechko's statement, and from increasing Soviet naval activism is that, in the absence of either an implicit or explicit agreement to mutually restrain the political content of naval deployments, we can expect intensified military-political behavior by the Soviets in the third world.

Conclusions

Moscow has continued over time to raise the naval limitations question, and there are substantial incentives for Soviet interest in naval limitation--removal of U.S. strategic forces from within striking range of the USSR, inhibiting U.S. intervention in the third world, reducing the costs and risks of their own involvement there. In fact, the Soviets have already concretely evinced an interest in at least one form of naval arms restraint: the prevention of unsafe navigation practices by the superpower navies vis-a-vis each other. In signing the Incidents at Sea Agreement in May 1972, each party undertook not only to "observe strictly the letter and spirit of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea,"²² but also to refrain from simulating attack by training naval weapons on the other party's ships, to "remain well clear" of the latter while operating in proximity to them, and to "avoid maneuvering in a manner which would hinder" the evolution of the other party's

naval formations.²³ While this agreement does not limit forces or deployments, it is designed to limit the provocative or dangerous use of naval forces. Indeed, the Soviets have publicly indicated that this instrument, though a step in the right direction, does not go far enough. "It is quite evident," wrote Captain First Rank V. Serkov in the September 1972 issue of Morskoy sbornik, "that the Agreement would more fully serve its purpose if it contained fixed maximal permissible distances for the approach of ships and aircraft....Therefore the Commission appointed by the parties in accordance with Article X [of the Agreement] will have to develop practical recommendations relative to concrete fixed distances which must be observed when approaching warships and aircraft."²⁴ This reflects a clear Soviet desire to further constrain the freedom of action of U.S. and Soviet ships operating near each other, perhaps even at some cost to their respective intelligence-gathering capabilities. Though neither side has explicitly stated that the Agreement is an "arms control" agreement, it is clear that these Soviet wishes, if realized, would go a long way toward making it one. Consequently, the probability that the Soviets are serious about pursuing some form of naval force limitation agreement cannot be discounted.

Nevertheless, from the Soviet perspective there is no necessary connection between naval limitations on the one hand, and constraints on the Soviet navy's increasing involvement in Third World affairs on the other. Those in the naval leadership

who may appear to favor arms control may be taking a minimum position on the issue, supporting limitations on strategic forces and prosecution of the fleet's political activities in the Third World. Gorshkov may well be aboard, however reluctantly, on the FBS issue. But after so long disparaging efforts to limit naval forces, it may be that he sees Brezhnev's most recent proposal as the least costly, least constraining arms limitation alternative for the navy. Accordingly, in preparing to negotiate a mutual limitations agreement, the U.S. should consider the growing use of the Soviet armed forces, in ways that cannot be described as purely defensive, to support Soviet foreign policy. An agreement that does not take account of the expanding political role of Soviet general purpose forces will have ignored the most likely stimulus to U.S.-Soviet conflict.

Regardless of whether an agreement to limit naval forces can be reached, there are benefits for the U.S. in continuing to engage in low-key contacts with the USSR on naval limitations. Inquiries might be made as to which Soviet ships would be affected, if the U.S. and USSR agreed to discuss the Brezhnev proposal. The Soviet response might provide more understanding of their naval employment policies.

In addition, in moving to the negotiating stage, timing appears a critical variable. Currently, there are some indications that the highest level of the Soviet political leadership wants to move in this direction, but there may be both external and internal constraints on so doing.

Domestic constraints seem to have had both a positive and negative effect on Soviet arms control initiatives. Prior to Brezhnev's 1974 statement, only one major spokesman from the armed forces--General Ogarkov*--is known to have come out in support of naval limitations. Within the Politburo, however, there are forces reportedly opposed to increases in the current level of spending and resource commitment to the third world and may view naval arms limitation as a way of reducing these costs and involvements. The current state of Arab-Soviet relations gives added ammunition to those in the Kremlin who may support a reduction in military commitments abroad.

The existence of these countervailing forces seems to have resulted in a policy advocating further arms limitations while constraining action toward this end. Reconciliation of opposing forces is probably necessary before an agreement can be concluded.

*Ogarkov was recently promoted to Deputy Minister of Defense. Before his election to the CPSU Central Committee at the 24th CPSU Congress in 1971, he was the second ranking member of the Soviet delegation to SALT I, II and III.

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